OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00424/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Extension of the existing car park to the west of the clubhouse.

Location: St Ives Rugby Club Somersham Road St Ives

Applicant: Mr Phil Brown

Grid Ref: 532489 273844

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is St Ives Rugby Club which is located to the north-east of St Ives and to the north-west of Somersham Road. There are no constraints associated with the site which lies within Flood Zone 1 and has a very low risk of flooding as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data.

This application seeks permission to extend the car park to the west of the established clubhouse/car parking area.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):

* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 - adopted May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery

LP5: Flood Risk
LP10: The Countryside
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP23: Tourism and Recreation
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017)
Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2024)
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Due to the use of the site there is a varied planning history associated with it and history from 1974 onwards is available to view on HDC's Public Access Site. The most relevant history is detailed below:

92/01529/FUL -Change of use to playing field and erection of temporary changing rooms and club house (Permission)

93/00768/FUL - Erection of changing rooms and clubhouse (Permission)

CONSULTATIONS

St Ives Town Council recommend approval.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Team - No representations received at the time of determination.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of a number of adopted neighbourhood plans, however, as stated above, there is not an adopted neighbourhood plan in place for St Ives. Therefore, in this case no neighbourhood plans are given weight in the determination of this application.

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider are:

*The principle of development
*Design and visual amenity
*Residential amenity
*Highway considerations
*Flood risk
*Biodiversity

*The principle of the development

The site lies outside of the built-up area of any defined settlement and therefore considered to be within the countryside. Policy LP10 is therefore the starting point for assessment. LP10 seeks to limit development within the countryside unless it is permitted via other Local Plan Policies. One such example is Policy LP23 (Tourism and Recreation) and this is expanded on in the proceeding sections of this report. Regardless of any relaxation, LP10 requires that all development within the countryside should avoid the loss of agricultural land and respect that character and beauty of the countryside by avoiding the introduction of factors such as noise, odour and obtrusive light.

In this case, given that this is an established use within the countryside and this development relates to what is a relatively minor extension of an authorised use within its established site there is considered to be no need to further assess against the requirements of LP10 as the principle of its siting is already established.

Policy LP23 allows for the expansion of a tourism, sport or leisure use within the countryside subject to a number of tests. As before, given that in this case the site is established and authorised under previous decisions the principle is established. This scheme relates to the extension of the car park, adjacent to the existing car park and the clubhouse building. It has a functional connection to the existing use and is on land which is already being used informally for parking purposes. There is no evidence to indicate that it would give rise to any harmful factors in terms of character or increased visitor numbers and in any event, the benefits of supporting the growth of a local sports facility would far outweigh any minor harm caused. This theme is also a thread running through a number of Paragraphs of the NPPF (2024).

Overall, the development is considered to be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with all other material planning considerations and conditions.

*Design and visual amenity

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan state, amongst other matters, that proposals will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings, including natural, historic and built environment, contributes positively to the character and identity of the area and

successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape.

The site is barely visible from Somersham Road given the dense boundary treatments and speed of travel (a 60mph limit in place). The car park is informal - spaces are not demarcated and the site is laid to hardcore. The submitted Planning Statement indicates that the area is used for informal overspill parking but that this is only possible in drier weather.

The scheme is relatively simple and involves the laying of permeable hardcore on land to the west of the car park/clubhouse. Given the informal existing arrangement and the fact that this is for an existing use it is not considered necessary to request hard surfacing or the demarcation of spaces. The visual appearance will be similar to the existing and overall complies with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Residential amenity

Policy LP14 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

The proposed development given its scale and nature will not be detrimental to residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Highway safety

The proposal does not make any alteration to the section adjacent to the highway nor to the way that vehicles enter or leave the site. The use is established and the area already used for informal parking. Whilst this will allow for increased members/visitors to the site, these are not presently controlled and, given the location adjacent to a main road (with no control over traffic flows) it is not considered that this would result in a harmful degree of vehicle movements. Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority were consulted but no representations have been received at the time of determination.

Overall, on balance, the scheme is considered to be acceptable in terms of highways safety impacts and therefore is considered to accord with Policy LP17 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Flood risk

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data and has an overall low risk of flooding from other sources. The site is set lower than the main road, as above, there are no changes at the access and the proposed use of permeable materials means that there should be no additional surface water run-off. As such, there are no concerns in terms of flooding or surface water and the scheme is acceptable and accords with Policies LP5 and LP15 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 if the Local Plan requires a development to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible. The scheme is also subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation (BNG).

In this case, it should be noted that there is a difference between achieving habitat creation (in accordance with BNG legislation) and offsetting any loss and achieving a net gain within the meaning of the policy. The former is discussed in further detail in the proceeding sections of this report. In terms of the latter, the policy is clear in that it states 'where possible'. In this case, (given

the nature of the development) it is considered that achieving a net gain would be challenging and no further pursuance of this matter is considered necessary.

Turning attention to the latter, a BNG Metric and Assessment has been provided with the application and these have been completed by a qualified Ecologist. The land subject to the application is maintained grassland (frequently mown with this condition observed at the time a site visit was completed). It is proposed to plant 33 trees on land within the site in order to achieve the 10% BNG. The Assessment details that the trees will achieve a poor condition (in terms of BNG) but will still offset the loss of the maintained grass. An error is showing in the metric but the Ecologist has advised that this is due to the differing values of the habitat creation. The Assessment concludes that the loss can be offset and 10% net gain achieved.

In terms of monitoring, the LPA has discretion as to when it is necessary to impose a condition to secure a long term monitoring plan and in this case, given the scale and nature of the development, the value of the habitat lost and that being created it is not considered reasonable to impose such a condition. The provision of the habitat will however be secured by condition.

Overall, subject to condition it is considered that the scheme can be realised in broad accordance with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Conclusion

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is acceptable in principle, would be visually acceptable and would not be harmful in terms of residential amenity, highway safety, flood risk or ecology.

Having regard to all relevant material considerations the proposed development is considered to comply with Policies LP2, LP5, LP10, LP11, LP12, LP14, LP15, LP23 and LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and consequently, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Kevin Simpson**